



Public Notification Letter

To: Interested Parties
From: Scientific Certification Systems
Date: September 20, 2008
Re: Notification of Pending FSC Certification Evaluation of the *Indiana Classified Forests Group*

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry (DOF) is seeking Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) endorsed group certification for the privately owned timberlands enrolled in the Classified Forest Program. The Forest Stewardship Council is a non-profit organization devoted to encouraging the responsible management of the world's forests. FSC sets standards that ensure forestry is practiced in an environmentally responsible, socially beneficial, and economically viable way. The Indiana Classified Forest Act was passed in 1921 to encourage landowners to keep their properties forested in exchange for a property tax reduction. The scope of this group certification evaluation will include roughly 7,000 private properties, ~410,000 acres, enrolled in the Classified Forest Program.

Scope and Certification Evaluation Process

Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), an FSC-accredited certification body based in Emeryville, California, will conduct this FSC evaluation.

Performance will be evaluated against the FSC Lake States-Central Hardwoods Regional Standard, Version 3.0, 2/10/2005. A copy of the standard is available from SCS upon request.

The Evaluation Process Includes the Following Phases:

- a) Public notification, distribution of the standard, solicitation of comments on the certification applicant
- b) Audit planning and document review
- c) Field assessment - A representative sample of field sites and operations within the defined forest area are inspected.
- d) Stakeholder consultation.
- e) Synthesis of findings – Compliance with the standard is ascertained and the certification decision is formulated
- f) Draft report – A report describing the evaluation process, findings, and certification decision is produced.
- g) Peer review – The evaluation report is peer reviewed by 2 independent natural resource professionals.
- h) Delivery of final certification report
- i) Public summary of certification report is released, if certification is awarded

Call for Public Participation

SCS welcomes comments on the forest management of the private lands enrolled in the Classified Forest Program or other topics pertinent to their seeking FSC group certification, such as whether the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry complies with the legal, social, technical, and environmental requirements of the standard or identification of high conservation value forests¹ within the group member lands. Comments can be submitted via email, standard mail, or facsimile to Dave Wager (contact info below). All comments will be kept in strict confidence at the request of the commenter.

Dates

The field evaluation is scheduled to commence during the week of October 20, 2008. The initial certification decision will be taken October 24. SCS will make arrangements to meet with interested parties during the evaluation if appropriate, but it is preferred that comments are submitted before the evaluation commences.

Dispute Resolution Procedure

As provided by the FSC Interim Dispute Resolution Protocol (Document 1.4.3) and the SCS Forest Conservation Program Quality Manual, dispute resolution procedures are in place and available to interested parties.

Additional Information

More information about FSC and SCS can be obtained from www.fsc.org and www.scscertified.com. Information on the Classified Forest Program can be found at <http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/6519.htm>. A copy of the standard to be used can be requested from SCS, or found online at www.fscus.org.

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¹ High Conservation Value Forests possess one or more of the following attributes: a) forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant: concentrations of biodiversity values (eg. endemism, endangered species, refugia); and/or large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance b) forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems c) forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (eg. watershed protection, erosion control) d) forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (eg. subsistence, health) and/or critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities). Also see Principle 9, in the FSC Principles and Criteria.